



**O-ACE'S**



## **Omaha Atari Computer Enthusiasts**

**Volume 5 Issue 10**

**October 1987**

**Wednesday, OCT 14  
MONTHLY MEETING  
La Vista Recreation Center  
7:00 P.M.**

### **OLD BUSINESS**

The September meeting was held at the La Vista Recreation Center and began at 8:00 pm with the monthly door prize selection. This month's winners were Roger Koment and Jamie Blinn.

The club's programming contest deadline finally arrived and all submissions were turned in at the September meeting. The winners will be announced in the October newsletter and the winning entries will be demonstrated at the October meeting. The winner in each category (8-Bit and ST) will receive a \$25 dollar gift certificate good at Hobby Town.

Following the closing of the programming contest, important dues and membership extension information was discussed. Not only has the club dues been decreased from \$24 to \$18 dollars per year and all current memberships extended by two months, but each member can extend his or her membership by another two months for each new member they bring into the club.

### **OTHER NEWS**

The Special Interest Group (SIG) meetings might be brought back on the last Wednesday of the month if enough interest is generated. The first couple of meetings would be devoted to using your system (i.e. hooking up printers, drives, etc..) and then more specific classes would take place.

**SIG MEETINGS MAY  
BE RESTARTED IN  
THE COMING MONTHS**

### **CLUB OFFICER ELECTIONS**

Of major importance this month was the nominations for club officers. The offices were announced and the nominations were taken.

The offices available and the people nominated were:

President:	Jamie Blinn
	Peter Killian
Vice Pres/Treasure:	Deane Bolin
Librarian 8-Bit:	Axel Ricker
ST:	Peter Killian
Editor 8-Bit:	
ST	

More nominations will take place at the October meeting and the elections will occur at the November meeting. All members are encouraged to run for an office.

### **PROGRAMMING CONTEST WINNERS**

ROGER REESE won in the 8-Bit category  
DEANE BOLIN won in the ST category

The club officers would like to thank all the members who submitted programs for the contest. Their hard work and effort was appreciated.

## THIS 'N THAT

by Donna Griggs

For those of you who have missed this column over the summer, I have been out of town more than in town; but, now that school has started, I am back to stay. Sorry for any inconvenience to those who like my tidbits.

It is almost time for elections in O-ACES, and we need your help. Come to the next meeting and volunteer for one of the positions or to help someone else who will be elected as an officer. All of us can use an assistant.

The newest trend in the ST world seems to be buying a system with both a monochrome and a color monitor. If you are one of these owners, then you know that switching connectors between these monitors is a real pain; and after a while, it begins to weaken the video jack on the back of your ST. Well, there is a solution to this problem. Monitor Master!

Monitor Master by Practical Solutions (\$49.99-59.99, depending on where you buy it) is a monitor switch box that allows you to switch easily between your monochrome and color monitors. If you use a monochrome monitor and a TV for color, you won't need to unplug the monitor to use the TV for low or medium resolution.

It provides a standard RCA jack for composite video so that using it with a regular composite monitor is possible if you have a RF modulator output on your ST. An RCA jack is also provided that allows you to feed the ST's sound into your stereo system or your composite monitor.

Electronic Arts is renewing its commitment to the Atari line with its newest offering--EMPIRE, a super-Risk style war simulation and MUSIC CONSTRUCTION SET, which supports MIDI devices.

Digital Vision, makers of the \$250 ComputerEyes color video digitizer for the ST, is producing a monochrome-only subset of its system for \$150. It will work in gray scales even on the ST color monitor and it sports the same excellent quality as its predecessor.

The XE game system will be carried here locally and will be shipped with FLIGHT SIMULATOR II, a 128K bank-select cartridge game for the new 8-bit system, a revamped Atari XE with 64K, detached keyboard, light gun, and the game MISSILE COMMAND built-in. An XE game cartridge can hold up to 256K. Also included is BUG HUNT, a shooting game that uses the new light gun. A mouse is available as an option.

The Atari XEP 80 (\$80), the 80 column box for the XE computers is available and looks much like a modem and provides 80-columns-by-24-rows of text. On a monochrome monitor, the display is superlative; on a color monitor, the text is readable but not too comfortable for extended use. This unit connects through a joystick port and serves as a parallel port for your machine. It comes with a utilities disk that includes demonstration programs. Atariwriter 80 is planned for release soon by Atari and several other major developers are working on products for this unit. Wait for the software before buying this product.

Antic Software's Stereotek 3-D Glasses (\$150) are finally being shipped. The package includes four demonstration programs. Steelyboink works with these glasses and is available from Antic for \$10; it displays 6 crystal balls bouncing inside a room, each wall of which sports unique and colorful animated graphics. As the balls move to and fro, they pick up reflections accurately. If you have used the cardboard red-blue glasses used with 3-D books and comics or been to a 3-D movie where polarized lenses were used, then you know the worst problem with both these methods is "cross talk", where the image destined for each individual eye "leaks" a bit, creating a ghost image in the other eye. Color is nearly impossible as well. Well this does not occur with the Stereotek glasses which use a new liquid crystal technology, where each lens is actually able to go from transparent to opaque and back to transparent again very quickly. Synched to the Atari or monochrome display, left-eye and right-eye images can be interlaced at up to 70 times per second, creating a 3-D effect that might compel you to tap on the monitor's front. Used with the new Cad 3-D and other programs, it is superlative.

See you next month where I will have more game hints, reviews, and rumors.

## Club Library News

By Axel Ricker

It's October now and I hope everyone has thrown away their summer time activities and returned to their computers. If so, then I can regain some desire to improve this library which, inspite of my effort, has not been met with any enthusiasm. That could be because everyone is switching over to the ST computer and if so then we ought to swing the emphasis to that line only.

Roger, who continues to do a great job putting out the monthly newsletter, never receives any help from anyone else in the club. It's you out there that can make or break this club, so lets see some articles or at least some suggestions about the library.

We now have the July-August Analog issue and may get the September issue if our illustrious President finds it in the pile of mail that has been accumulating on his desk at home since he left for college. I also hope to have found a steadier source for our Antic issues and hope to update these in the following month.

The newest disk is called Dandy. This is an old game dating back to 1983 when it was presented by APX. It is now classified as a public domain disk since it is no longer being published. Even though the graphics are quite simple I think most will find this game entertaining enough to get lost in it for several hours.

It has 26 dungeons and an editor to create new ones. One has a choice of 3 different levels and up to 4 players can play at the same time depending on how many joysticks your computer will allow you to use. The object is to get through each dungeon accumulating as much treasure as possible using the keys you find to get into various parts of the dungeon. One carries a bow to destroy any monsters one runs into, though one can pick up bombs that when detonated will destroy anything on the screen. There are also food pellets that replenish your strength and magic hearts that can ressurect you after dying if only your teammates will find and shoot it for you. All in all a very well put together game. Because of this, it and its instructions will cost \$2 dollars

instead of the customary dollar.

I promise next month to have added at least 3 new disks beside any new Analog and Antic ones I get. Till next time, remember... the 8-bit Atari is still a very good useful computer.

## NOTES FROM THE ST EDITOR

By Deane Bolin

Well, here it is time for another column. This month I think I will do some rambling.

For all of you who like to play maze games, the ultimate, Midi Maze, has finally hit the market. If you have two or more STs, you can hook them together and play interactively with each other. Up to 16 STs supposedly can be hooked together. You only see what your player sees, so you don't know who's shooting at or hitting you until you can turn around to see them. Also, one machine can watch or monitor the rest of the players. Great stuff. You can also play with only one machine.

On another note, I have been trying to come up with some new ideas on ways to help the Club increase it's membership and also increase the benefits to it's members. After all, a club without members, or a club without benefits to those members, is in a heap of trouble. Our club isn't dying, but it could sure stand some perking up. So, if you have any suggestions on how to improve our services (I say services because that's what we should provide) to our members, well, don't be shy. After all, we want to keep our Atari world alive and well.

For all you Music lovers out there, I have found several good BBSs that have a good variety of music for just about whatever type of music or instrument you may have or like. There are scads of songs for the Music Studio. Also some of the other programs like Dr.T, Ez Track, and others are getting quite a following also.

On the local scene, Atari-O (592-4435) has a fair selection. On the long distance side there are several BBSs. One in particular is the SCAT BBS (312-462-9844), and there is always CompuServe, Delphi, Genie and the Source with a large selection of about anything you could want. On Atari-O is a list of Midi BBS numbers called MIDIBBS.ARC if you want a larger list.

Well, I have rambled enough for now. If there is anything you would like to see in the ST Editor section, let me know. Also, be thinking of ways to improve your club, and don't be shy. If you have an idea or suggestion or even(gasp) complaints, speak up. That's the only way we can know what you want for YOUR ATARI club.

STidBits: News and Opinion on the Atari ST computers  
by Peter R. Killian

This month's column contains a bit of a surprise. Nestled neatly between the usual reviews is a strongly-worded editorial. Reviews cover a game program and some odds and ends of hardware.

A "FUN" LITTLE GAME PROGRAM

KNICKER BOCKERS from TDC is a quick and fun game. I liked it from the first time I started the game up. It has a catchy tune when you start the program and between games. Play is much like PAC-Man or other games of this sort. You scoot through a maze pushing/kicking single-paneled doors that double as most of the walls of the maze. The object of the game is to avoid the four "bad guys" (called "Wild Bill and his nasty band of Grugs) and, at the same time, make as many squares as you can with the doors. The characters are delightfully animated like small cartoons -- some of them remind me of the "fry guys" from the McDonald's commercials and others look more like Grog from the B.C. comic strip. The program is recommended for ages 7 and up and my kids love it. They beg more to play it than any other program I have. The weakest parts of the program are the way it is packaged and the lack of documentation. It comes in a flimsy, clear plastic folding holder and the instructions come on a small (about 5x8") folded paper that looks like it was made on a copier. This drawback is largely made up for by the fact that the program cost only \$14.95 from Hobby Town. I would not hesitate to recommend as a good way to just have fun between "working" with your computer.

UP ON THE SOAP BOX

(The following material is unabashedly opinionated -- read at your own risk!)  
\*\*\* FLAME ON! \*\*\*

I just read an article that BURNS ME UP! The article was in a gaming magazine and purported to be unbiased in its dealing with different computer brands. In fact, he was writing in response to letters asking which computer is the best one to buy. Despite this claim of

fairness, the authors make a heavy play against Atari (both the ST and the eight bit machines). The main argument was, believe it or not, that these machines do not cost enough!!

To be fair, they did not quite put the argument that way. They argued instead on seemingly more reasonable grounds as follows: "In order for a computer to be a successful computer, there must be a strong, installed base of users."

This argument is rather silly to my mind because it assumes success before starting. In other words, "you can't sell more unless you have already sold more". This implies that there cannot ever be a new machine unless it apes an existing successful machine. With this logic, earlier computer makers would never have started because they did not have such an "installed base". Such reasoning smacks of the unreasoning worship of "bigger is better" and the bandwagon effect.

The authors, however, are not even consistent here! Their true bias (Apple) became more clear to me when they listed current leading computers as: "Apple Macintosh (Mac), Apple II family, Commodore Amiga (Amiga), and -- a real surprise entry last year with massive unit sales -- IBM microcomputers and compatible units (PC/MSDOS)." Come on now, where have these people been - the planet Mars? IBMs and compatibles have clearly sold well for several years now.

The real scorcher in their argument follows the list and I quote it here verbatim even though it really zings Atari. I invite others to comment further on both my comments and those of the passage below. Now, on with the dirt!

(from "The Role of Computers", Dragon magazine, Oct 87)

"Why aren't Atari 8-bit machines (800, 1200, 1200XL) series, Atari ST (ST) or Commodore 64/128 (C64/128) computers in this list? There is not a very strong dealer base for these machines. Take Atari, for example: When one 'authorized' Atari dealer in your town

carries an ST for a certain price, then a second 'authorized' Atari dealer in the same town undercuts the first dealer by \$99, how can ANY dealer feel confident in carrying that line of machines? There's very little profit to be made in a price war. Where's the Atari company support for a dealer base? Plus, have you ever tried to get one-day service for an Atari computer or disk drive that has decided to become operationally recalcitrant? We live in a major metropolitan area and still had to drive nearly 45 miles to find a dealer that could handle Atari 1200XL repairs, and even then the repairs required seven days before the computer was returned to us. Granted, the ST is a splendid machine graphically, but without a strong dealer base, the computer is an also-ran in our opinion."

I have major problems with their comments on Atari, even though some of their points are certainly valid. First, they seem to be completely out to lunch on the 8-bit line. To my knowledge, Atari never made a 1200 other than the 1200XL and that machine has been out of production for years. Moreover, the 1200XL is certainly not the current model -- how could they miss the 800XL, 600XL, 130XE, etc.? Second, and much more important, this business of one dealer "undercutting" another sounds really fishy. I think this point cuts to the very heart of the matter, where the seller is valued over the buyer. I don't know about you, but I bought my computer for me, not to make someone else a profit! To my way of think, over-emphasis on the seller and his/her profit is the main thing wrong with American business now. As long as we over-stress profit over value we will continue to lose business to others who are better able to deliver a lower price. Look at the auto industry and TV/stereo sales. They both also stressed dealer support, but non-discount policies hardly endeared them to the general buying public once they saw a different choice. For that matter, how well have the other computer makers done at holding to a policy of not undercutting each other? Can you find similar price cuts for their computers? You bet you can! The discounts offered are much deeper than

\$99, which only goes to prove how over-priced most of them are to begin with. Finally, their testimony of a single case of repair difficulty hardly seems fair. Omaha may not be bursting with choices for Atari service, but I can vouch for the quality of one-day service here. When I brought my ST in for repairs, I did not have to do without for a single day, much less for seven.

## SECOND FLAME -- PIRACY

One point they raise that I agree with is that piracy hurts, and it has especially hurt Atari computers. As they put it, "C64 and Atari 8-bit systems users have the worst record of illegal software duplication of any computer systems. If you don't believe us, log onto any Commodore or Atari bulletin board and note how many commercial programs are offered for 'public domain' access."

This last allegation really hurts as I have heard it before, and suspect there is some truth to it. I don't know where the authors live, but I have yet to see an Atari bulletin board here that fits their categorization of offering commercial programs for download, and I hope I never do. I know there is piracy here in Omaha (as there is elsewhere), but the negative images the authors call up only reinforce the need for the anti-piracy stand of this club.

\*\*\* FLAME OFF \*\*\*

## NEW PRODUCTS

These next few items come from E. Arthur Brown, which I found out about through a 12-page ad I got in the mail. I cannot personally vouch for the quality of their products, but I found several items intriguing. They have a box to allow monochrome programs to run on color monitors and vice versa (cost: \$49.95). They also sell cables to plug "standard" disk drives directly into the ST (cost: \$39.95). More mundane products include expandable memory boards, cables to plug an ST into composite monitors, a low-cost scanner to digitize graphics, and many discounted software programs (they specialize in Michtron).

**\*\*\* CLUB OFFICERS \*\*\***

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Editor 8-Bit - Roger Reese/331-1336  
ST - Deane Bolin/291-1678  
Member At Large - Vacant

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